

A RUSSIAN LEAR. From the Pall Mall Gazette.

The current number of the Yevstnik Dzeropki contains a story by M. Turgenev which is as remarkable for the insight it gives into some of the strange phases of Russian life as for the great artistic merit which it possesses. There is no better guide for any one who wishes to become acquainted with the real characteristics of Russian society than is afforded by M. Turgenev's writings. His portraits are like photographs, or rather like skillful drawings after photographs, just as his descriptions of scenery are so faithful that to any one who is familiar with the districts to which they refer, they seem, poetic as they are, to be careful studies of actually existing scenes. In all probability the persons of the terrible domestic drama which he has now brought before the eyes of his readers once played their parts, at least to some extent, in real life. And yet the behavior, in some respects, seems to an English reader almost incredible; for real life in Russia has, or at least used to have, some features which must appear at first sight unreal in the extreme to spectators who look on from the outside only. We know what strange ideas spring up, how strongly prejudices become confirmed, even at home, in persons who live in remote districts apart from the healthy friction of society and the useful restraint of public opinion. But we can have but little idea of the extent to which such ideas and prejudices may have become developed in the remote districts of so vast and stagnant a country as Russia at a time when a social system prevailed under which a passionate or overbearing man found no one to surround him with the restraints of the restraints of the will and the passions to which we are accustomed to trust for safety. In the case of the story now before us, the general idea may easily be conjectured from the little it bears. The self-sacrifice of a father, whether he be a King Lear or a Pere Goriot, and the ingratitude of his children, are themes upon which many a domestic tragedy has already been constructed. But the particular form in which the Russian Lear's recentment manifests itself and the position which is finally occupied by the Regan of the story—one in which no Cordelia figures—are so extraordinary that no amount of familiarity with the general idea of such a family quarrel may have given rise can assist the reader in predicting them.

A LABORATORY FOR CHEMICAL RESEARCH. BY PROFESSOR ALBERT R. LEIDY.

In a recent number of the Revue des Deux Mondes will be found an article by an eminent French author, containing among a number of other comparisons, all favorable to Germany, one relating to the laboratories of Prussia and of France. The writer earnestly calls the attention of his countrymen to the great superiority of the German Universities respecting their facilities for theoretical investigation and practical application in the departments of Physics and Chemistry. He dwells especially upon the great Friedrich Wilhelm Laboratory at Berlin, recently completed at a cost of a million and a half of francs, and of the similar laboratory at Bonn, which cost a half million of francs. The former, under the charge of the illustrious chemist Prof. Hofmann, more resembles in its external appearance, in its lengthy corridors, frescoed halls, and spacious lecture room, some museum devoted to art, than the dingy accommodations which were long thought adequate to the wants of chemists. The laboratory of the Ecole des Mines impressed me the most favorably of those which I saw in Paris. It is restricted, however, to metallurgical operations. But the laboratories of the Ecole Polytechnique, of the Jardin des Plantes, the antiquated and dismal apartments of the Ecole Centrale, and even the newly-erected addition to the Sorbonne, are nothing in comparison with the facilities of the laboratory of Berlin. And the practical effect of this inferiority is manifest in the relative condition of the physical sciences in the two countries. A great French chemist begins a philosophical treatise, recently published, with the declaration that "Chemistry is a French science." But the greater bulk and importance of the contributions which have been and are being made to chemistry by German authors sufficiently disprove this arrogant assumption. And, moreover, the fact that German, rather than French, is becoming the general language of science upon the continent, is evidence of the most convincing kind. Not many years ago the proceedings of the Royal Academy at Berlin were published in the latter language; now, this and all other contributions from Prussia are in German. Of late years the importance of these studies has so deeply impressed the public mind in some portions of our own country, that the course of collegiate and academic instruction has been revolutionized. As, for example, at Cambridge, where the capacities of the college laboratory are at present being enlarged to such an extent as to accommodate eighty students with desks and all the paraphernalia of manipulation. Their course is intended to combine the practical with the philosophical in such a way as not only to enable the students to do but to think. They commence at once with manipulative chemistry, using for the purpose the elaborate treatise of President Elliot and Prof. Storer. Then the students enter upon the study of the admirable Chemical Philosophy recently published by Prof. Cooke, which taxes their thinking powers (quite as much, perhaps, as Hamilton or Mill's Logic. At the same time they attend a series of chemical lectures, finally enter upon a course of analysis. Likewise, a special laboratory is provided, where, during the last twelve years, a number of investigations have been made by young American chemists, who are highly creditable to our national scholarship, and have been recognized as such abroad.

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The Slavonic counterpart of the ill-starred King of Britain is the owner of a property in the interior of Russia. Marlin Petrovich Kharlof is a man of huge proportions and of immense bodily strength. His appearance is more like a bear than a man, bulky, clumsy, prompt to anger, and terrible when aroused to wrath. He never boasts of his thews and sinews, but he is beyond measure proud of his wisdom and his strength, and he will not allow his intellect to amount to a passion. Of one power none he stands in dread—this giant with a hero's heart is afraid of death. At times he is liable to attacks of melancholy, and then he shuts himself up in his room, and sits at a table, and reads which he has a high opinion, representing a lighted candle which the winds—human heads with puffed-out cheeks—strive to blow out, with an inscription under it, "Such is the life of man!" When he is not in a somnolent mood, he turns to the picture on the wall; but when gloomy feelings invade him, he turns it back again, shaking his head with an air of conviction over it, and deriving some consolation from listening to his favorite servant, who reads aloud to him the contents of a periodical called "Diligence in Repose," such phrases as, "But the man who is a prey to his passions deduces from that solitary position which he occupies among created things, completely different conclusions. To religion, however, even in his melancholy moods, he seldom turns, exclaiming himself for appearing very rarely in church by saying that he is afraid a man of his size would inconvenience the other worshippers. Such is the man who suddenly takes it into his head to disembarrass himself of the cares which attach to property by dividing all that he has between his two daughters. He has received a warning, he says, that death is at hand. While he is busy with his calculations, a knock is heard, and he opens the door, and finds a man, crushing his left side beneath its weight; and when he awoke he found that side numb, and he felt sure that in the form of that black coil he had seen his own approaching end. He calls his friends and neighbors together to witness the transfer of his property to his daughters, made with all due formality in the presence of the legal functionaries of the district. The transfer scene is a very strange one, and is admirably described. Kharlof occupies the chief place, clothed in his colonial uniform, arrayed in his 1812 uniform, with a medal on his breast, and a sash by his side. Near him are his two daughters: Anna, the elder, slightly built, with thick yellow hair, and small light blue eyes and thin lips; and Evlampia, the younger, tall and largely framed, with masses of flaxen hair, and immense dark blue eyes, expressive of a somewhat wild, untamed nature. The elder sister is accompanied by her husband, a handsome, Jewish-looking young man, Slyotkine by name, whose character is not so much a constant thirst for gain and a servile obedience to the commands of his father-in-law. Evlampia is still unmarried. A deed of renunciation is read aloud by Slyotkine. By it Kharlof divides all his property between his two daughters, reserving to himself only the right of continuing to live in the rooms actually occupied by him, and of receiving his "natural provision" and ten paper roubles (at out as many francs) a month for shoes and clothing. The last sentence of the act Kharlof reads himself, and the deed is signed, and must be carried out by his daughters, and kept intact as a command. For I, next to God, am my own head, and to no one have I given, nor am I bound to give, any account. And if they carry out my will, then my parental blessing shall be upon them; but if they do not carry out my will, then my parental malediction shall be upon them, now and for ever. Amen! At the end he lifts the paper above his head. Anna and her husband fell on their knees before him, and bend their heads to the ground. But Evlampia does not move till her father turns to her with a "Well, now, what are you going to do?" Then she rushes up, and makes her objections also to the ground. One of the magistrates then proceeds to read a formal deed—that which had been read aloud having been a flimsy and informal composition of Kharlof's—and afterwards goes out on the balcony in front of the house and exclaims what has taken place to the bystanders, apostrophizing them in this style, "Listen, devils! understand, devils!" On which "they all bowed together, as if at a word of command, each of the 'devils and demons' holding his hat high, and his hand over his eye, taking his eyes off the window at which Kharlof's figure appeared." Then a priest and a sub-deacon appear, dressed in threadbare vestments; the odors of incense arise from an old brass chalice; service is performed, and at the end of which the two daughters again kneel before their father, and bend their foreheads to the ground; and finally all who are present sit down to breakfast, at which the magistrate proposes first the health of the "fair proprietress," and then that of the "eminently respectable and supremely generous" father. On hearing the word "generous," Slyotkine jumps up and attempts to kiss his benefactor and father-in-law; but at this moment the brother of Kharlof's dead wife, who is present, and who is vexed at not having had anything done for him by his brother-in-law, takes it into his head to predict loudly that Kharlof will repent of his "generosity" some day, when his daughters "turn him, the servant of God, backwards, out of the house, and into the snow."

The scene in which his wild proceedings are described is a strange one indeed. Kharlof enters into the house in a picturesque way, and applies all his enormous strength, now fully restored to him, to destroying the roof. From below a terrified crowd gazed at the madman, who is wreaking his vengeance on all that he can lay hands on. The covering of the roof is built of heavy timbers, and is supported by a heavy structure which bears but little likeness to a firm English roof. The peasants swarm into the yard, but none of them show any intention to interfere with him, however much they are ordered or entreated to do so by the wretched Slyotkine, who rushes about in a state of frenzy, yellow with terror, brandishing a gun, with which he threatens to shoot his father-in-law. Anna runs in and out of the house in a state of distraction. Evlampia leans like a statue against a wall, never taking her eyes off her father. By her side stands an old bareheaded priest, supporting a large cross with both hands, and now and then in a strange way, he turns first towards Kharlof. At last Slyotkine levels his gun and is on the point of shooting when Evlampia strikes up his arm. Then she turns to her father, calls to him that she and her sister have signed, and begs him to pardon them, and to come down and live with them again. But, standing there on high, with hands all torn and bleeding, and blood streaming through the rents in his clothes, and his white hair and beard tossed about by the wind, only cries that down, down, and he has no more to say. Then, when suddenly a part of the woodwork which Kharlof is pushing gives way, and he falls headlong with it from the roof to the ground. In a few minutes he breathes his last. We pass on to the last two scenes in this domestic tragedy. Some years after Kharlof's death, the narrator of the story pays a visit to the house in which that victim of filial ingratitude used to live. It is in perfect order, and the room in which he died is in its original state. Kharlof's elder daughter, now a widow, lives in it with her children. Her sister, Evlampia, had disappeared soon after her father's death, taking with her nearly a store of money, and no news had ever been heard of her. Anna evidently leads a very happy life. Her health is excellent, her children are handsome and strong, her estate is in admirable order. An air of quiet and of substantial comfort pervades the whole house and its belongings. Her neighbors, who among themselves are not so much of their belief that she poisoned her husband, show her unfeigned respect. For them she is a truly great woman, one who, if she had been placed upon a throne, would have been "a Semiramis or a Catherine the Second." Four years later the narrator comes out on a shooting excursion in the neighborhood of St. Petersburg, and he passes a strange-looking house, almost hidden behind a high and close paling, only its steep red roof being visible from the high road. This house, he is told by his companion, a man who is acquainted with everything that goes on, belongs to some of the members of one of the wildest and most fanatical of the Russian sects, and in it dwells their head, and being whom they hold most sacred, their mystical "Mother of God." The house exercises a strange influence upon him, he knows not why, and he often finds himself near it when out shooting. On one occasion the gate opens and he passes, and a carriage comes out, drawn by a mighty horse and driven by a strikingly handsome young man, a merchant's dress. By his side sits a tall woman, erect as a dart, in whom the sportsman to his utter stupefaction recognizes Evlampia. Her face has grown longer and thinner, her complexion has become darker, and she has wrinkles a little; but the principal change which has taken place in her is to be found in her expression, which has become one of unalloyed pride and self-confidence. Her look is now that of a woman who lives surrounded by worshippers as by slaves—who has long forgotten any time at which her every wish was not instantly accomplished. Her old acquaintance calls her by her former name, but her companion lashes his horse, the carriage darts away at full speed, and in a few minutes she is out of sight. Nothing more is ever heard of her, and the mystery is never cleared up as to how she became recognized as a "Mother of God," a sacred being from whom a Messiah is some day to spring.

Such is a bare outline of M. Turgenev's story. With what dramatic skill and grace of diction it is told may be easily imagined by all who are in any degree acquainted with his writings. A young man named Holcomb was recently arrested in Georgia for falsifying the census returns of Liberty county. As he was to be paid so much per hundred, he thought he should make a good stroke of business by setting down the population at just double what it really is. George S. Constant, of Rosedale, in New York, who had been some \$100 about fourteen years ago, while asleep, was lately notified by an anonymous letter that he would find the amount in a package at the Kingston Express office. He went there on the following day and received it. It was precisely in such a way that it would be impossible to trace out the thief through it. The Detroit Post says: "Wooden water pipes were recently taken out in Woodward avenue, laid there forty-three years ago. The wood is as dry as a bone, and is showing no signs of decay even retaining the bark, and on entering through it into the wood the timber was found as bright and as sound as ever. The pipes were made of tamarack logs, about sixteen feet in length and eight or ten inches in diameter, bored of log, seven inches in diameter. The pipes were disconnected from the distribution pipes several years ago. They were embedded in clay at a depth of four or five feet."

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